

# State of Connecticut

## Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Annual Report



for

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

December 2020



*A Message from  
the Connecticut Department of Labor  
and  
the Governor's Workforce Council*

Beginning July 1, 2019, and in the months that followed, the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and its five Workforce Development Board (WDB) partners operated as planned under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Employers and job seekers accessed a host of services and innovative programs, resulting in positive outcomes and successes around the state. Even the best laid plans, however, could not have projected the arrival of a health pandemic or the magnitude of COVID-19's impact on state and local government operations, businesses, education systems, the economy, and the lives of our residents beginning in March 2020.

This WIOA Annual Report presents highlights of Program Year 2019 (PY19) and shares the many achievements attained through employment and training programs and numerous exceptional projects. Most summaries describe the impact of the pandemic and the efforts made to overcome tremendous hurdles that were encountered, such as the extraordinary volume of Unemployment Insurance claims and the sudden shift to remote business operations in the face of health restrictions and shutdowns. Despite the incredible challenges, our steadfast goals were to maintain service delivery and keep the state moving forward. Through the mutual commitment of CTDOL and its partners to stay connected, maintain collaboration, and share ideas and best practices, Connecticut was able to accomplish many goals.

With the pandemic continuing as PY19 came to a close, challenges remain for the future. Successful programs will continue to be offered as we also pursue and develop new workforce development options to fulfill short-term and long-term needs and plans. The Connecticut Department of Labor and the Workforce Development Boards are intent upon creating job opportunities for our citizens, preparing a skilled workforce for employers, and strengthening Connecticut's economy.

Kurt Westby  
Commissioner  
Department of Labor

Garrett Moran  
Chairman  
Governor's Workforce Council



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**On the cover:** State Capitol, Hartford, Connecticut (photo credit: Mary Ziomek)

**State of Connecticut**  
**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**  
**Annual Report**  
**July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020**

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) - Program Year 2019**

Program Year 2019 (PY19) under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act presented the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and the state's five Workforce Development Boards (WDB) with many challenges and opportunities. Aiming for positive growth for the state and its WIOA customers, various avenues were pursued. Many workforce development activities and services funded by WIOA continued to be offered given their successful past performance, and, simultaneously, Connecticut's WIOA partners developed and offered new, innovative programs that benefited job seekers and employers. Extraordinary challenges were created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic upheaval it caused in Connecticut, as it did across the country. With determination and concerted efforts throughout PY19, CTDOL fulfilled WIOA requirements, provided administrative oversight and guidance, monitored contracts and related activities to ensure compliance with the Act, and progressed toward programmatic goals. The year proved to be successful and yielded many promising plans for further development.

Governor Ned Lamont has stated his goal to ensure Connecticut's workforce system is designed to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Toward that end, the governor signed Executive Order No. 4 on October 29, 2019, which directs the creation of the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC), formerly known as the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission. This body is responsible for partnering with the business community and knocking down barriers, including those amongst state government agencies, so Connecticut's workforce development system can become the most aligned, high-quality, and equitable system in the country. The Council includes top executives from key industries as well as leaders of nonprofits, unions, the legislature, and educational institutions.



*Governor Lamont led the first meeting of the GWC.*

The Council is emblematic of Connecticut's approach of bringing the public and private sectors together to drive the state's economic growth. Strategic goals of the Council include:

- Strengthening the bridge from secondary to post-secondary education;
- Aligning education and workforce development programs with industry needs through regional Next Generation Sector Partnerships;
- Reducing barriers to training; and
- Measuring data-informed outcomes.



The first meeting of the GWC was held on November 21, 2019 and included a review of the Council's role, functions and structure. Six committees have been formed to address the state's primary industry sectors, data performance and planning, education and training, and supportive services. Council meetings have been held quarterly. The Council chair and vice-chair have conducted a listening tour of businesses, universities and educational institutions, state and local leaders, philanthropic organizations, and Workforce Development Boards. A new strategic plan will be submitted to the Connecticut legislature and governor in October 2020.

The Council and its chair will take a lead role in advising the governor on the state's workforce development strategy and supporting the state's economic growth. It will also coordinate among stakeholders in the workforce system, including businesses, state agencies, quasi-public and independent entities, boards, councils, commissions, public and private education and training institutions, Workforce Development Boards, nonprofit institutions, and labor unions.

CTDOL's Employment Services (ES) Operations Unit contributed significantly to the agency's efforts to meet its WIOA goals during PY19, to the benefit of both employers and jobseekers in Connecticut. In addition to the highlights offered in the "Employment and Training" section of this report, ES staff also:

- Collaborated on the development of the CT Back To Work Initiative page (<https://business.ct.gov/jobs-and-resources>) with the governor's office, other state agencies, private industry, and the Governor's Workforce Council. Developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and easily accessible via the State of Connecticut's coronavirus website ([ct.gov/coronavirus](https://ct.gov/coronavirus)), the page provides several resources that are available to support job seekers and businesses in getting back to work quickly and safely. Resources include links to finding and posting a job through CTHires, the National Labor Exchange (NLX), and a custom portal for Connecticut from Indeed, as well as links to a full suite of remote training through Metrix Learning and 180 Skills. These online classes, which are available to Connecticut residents at no cost, can yield industry-recognized certificates, apprenticeship instructional hours, college credit, skills to help enhance an individual's résumé, and much more. This partnership is committed to assisting residents to advance their careers so that we come out of the pandemic crisis stronger and better equipped to handle the needs of the 21st century economy.
- Updated and maintained the interagency "Employer Resource Guide" and "Employer Reference Card" which offer road maps to the many programs, services and incentives for businesses. Available in print and electronic format, these annually-updated materials provide important marketing and training tools for business services professionals.

During the Program Year beginning July 1, 2019, CTDOL's Employment Services (ES) staff continued to provide comprehensive, in-person Unemployment Insurance (UI) assistance in the American Job Centers (AJCs) in all five Workforce Development Board areas. This UI assistance provided solutions to a host of matters, such as providing return to work notifications, responding to held claim inquiries and status letter requests, processing referee and board appeals, reopening unemployment claims, determining eligibility issues, and helping customers

navigate UI online systems. In addition to the UI office assistance, claimants were informed about ES services and referred to re-employment and partner staff for additional services.

In mid-March 2020, CTDOL's American Job Centers closed suddenly with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. All AJC resources were immediately diverted to assist with the unprecedented volume of UI claims resulting from the pandemic. For the period of July 1, 2019 through March 13, 2020, CTDOL staff had assisted more than 101,000 UI customers. From March 13, 2020 through June 30, 2020, the end of the Program Year, Connecticut processed hundreds of thousands of UI claims. The number of claims processed in this three and a half month period was equivalent to the previous *four years* of unemployment claims. To assist with the claims processing, and in an effort to avoid or minimize delays to our customers in receiving their UI payments, CTDOL used automation to inform, guide and update claimants and hired temporary staff.

CTDOL has joined a consortium of states (Mississippi, Maine and Rhode Island) in order to implement a modernized Unemployment Insurance system. The new system will provide integrated functionality for the Tax, Benefits, and Appeals Units of the Unemployment Insurance Division. The project was in the development and testing phase and was scheduled for implementation in May 2021; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CTDOL was forced to remove resources from the project to assist with the UI workload. Staff is scheduled to return to the project in late 2020 and system implementation is now tentatively scheduled for 2022.

During PY19, CTDOL's WIOA Administration Unit continued to fulfill a host of responsibilities under the Act on behalf of the agency, including contract development, fiscal and programmatic monitoring, oversight and approvals for the ETPL, preparation of the WIOA Annual Report, and numerous other functions. In addition to staff coordination with the WDBs on projects, plans, and contract processing, WIOA Administration maintained frequent communication with workforce development partners, attended local board meetings, hosted periodic meetings with the WDBs and other partners, and worked with Geographic Solutions to make improvements to the CTHires case management system. One major undertaking entailed an in-depth review of CTHires' provider and program data to identify extraneous entries which mainly resulted from conversion of information from previous data systems.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in the late winter of 2020, impacts hit the state with astounding swiftness. Strict health guidelines, restrictions and shutdowns were put into place around the state. The economy was instantly affected and, in turn, the livelihoods of residents were in peril. In response, CTDOL's WIOA Administration Unit quickly assessed the many operations effected by the pandemic's alteration to the normal delivery of services, and adapted unit functions to provide administration and oversight of WIOA activities via remote. In addition, to assist with the tremendous amount of unemployment claims resulting from the pandemic's impact on the economy, WIOA Unit staff volunteered or were assigned to a variety of essential UI and Shared Work tasks. The efforts of all staff contributed significantly to the agency's response to thousands of Connecticut residents and businesses during a time of incredible difficulty and uncertainty.

Despite the daunting impact of the pandemic and grand scale of challenges that unfolded, CTDOL maintained its focus on serving customers, while at the same time fulfilling WIOA obligations and working toward established goals. The agency fostered growth, strengthened

partnerships, and, most certainly, overcame challenges. Together with Connecticut's workforce development partners, new opportunities were pursued, successful services continued, accomplishments were attained, and plans for the future were made, as the pages that follow reflect.

## **State Evaluations, Oversight Activities, and Guidance**

### **Compliance Monitoring**

Compliance monitoring, as set forth in 2 CFR 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards," was conducted at two of the five regional Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) in 2019-2020, in accordance with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations at 20 CFR §683.410. Compliance reviews of the other three WDBs for Program Year 2019 were planned, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting health guidelines and restrictions (including office closures), monitors were unable to perform reviews of those boards. Jobs First Employment Services (JFES), which is the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, was monitored during the compliance reviews at the two boards as well. Other grants administered by CTDOL were also monitored during 2019-2020, in accordance with contract requirements.

The annual WIOA compliance monitoring included a review of financial management, consisting of financial reporting, cost allocation methodology, cash management, allowable costs, payroll controls, audit requirements, procurement and property controls. In addition, WIOA active participant files were sampled and reviewed for eligibility verification for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth in all five areas.

All recommended corrective action from the 2018-2019 monitoring review was completed and adequate controls appeared to be in place. Overall, the 2019-2020 monitoring review results showed that the two WDBs were in compliance with federal and state administrative requirements. Any findings were satisfactorily resolved and the WDBs made continuous improvements through the implementation of new policies and procedures during the program year.

### **Status of State Evaluation Activities**

The Connecticut Department of Labor's Office of Research produces the "Higher Education/Workforce Legislative Report Card" (LRC) which includes an online tool at <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/LRC/LRC2.aspx>. The LRC reports employment by industry and average wages of recent graduates of Connecticut's public colleges and universities. Demographic information is also included, as are results by program of study. Users can compare outcomes of colleges and universities online or download tables for further analysis.

### **Administrative Review and Technical Assistance**

Monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance are integral oversight responsibilities of the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and are mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and other applicable laws and regulations. CTDOL's WIOA Administration staff conducts annual program, data, and fiscal monitoring of the Workforce Development

Boards and, throughout the year, offers technical assistance and performs administrative reviews to continually evaluate program components.

Additionally, the WIOA Administration Unit staff provides guidance to WDB staff, conducts Data Validation as required by USDOL, evaluates program activities for compliance with USDOL and CTDOL policies, and is available for consultation on program-related matters. Administrative reviews are also conducted and include, but are not limited to:

- Adherence to and compliance with USDOL ETA and CTDOL policies
- Eligibility for the WIOA program, including barriers and priority of service
- Performance outcomes for Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth participants
- WIOA outcome measures, including achievement of negotiated program goals

During PY19, specific oversight was offered to WDBs regarding:

- ETPL, including the Continued Eligibility process
- Data and program analysis
- CTHires (case management system) support and training

In March 2020, COVID-19 severely impacted Connecticut's ability to provide workforce services to participants system-wide given the closure of the state's American Job Centers to the public. In response to this crisis, CTDOL teamed up with partners to implement virtual services for Title I and JFES participants through a WIOA preapplication in the CTHires system which could be completed by staff or participants remotely. Participants uploaded verification documentation via the CTHires system, decreasing participant wait time to obtain services. In addition, partners altered their workflows and policies to allow staff to work with participants remotely. While the technology to accomplish remote intake, case management and training exist, many participants were not able to utilize this technology due to lack of equipment or the knowledge required to navigate the technology. In response, CTDOL and its partners began working on developing training programs and outreach to community partners that may be able to provide the equipment or training needed to use remote technology.

As a result of COVID-19, program monitoring in PY19 included desk audits of participant files for each of the five regions in Connecticut. The WIOA Administration Unit staff completed development of a monitoring tool for program participants and conducted a comprehensive review of a selection of participant cases in each WDB region. An outcome report describing the successes and challenges participants face in reaching economic self-sufficiency was prepared by CTDOL for each WDB. The monitoring process involved:

- Interviewing WDB staff, as well as providers and subcontractors;
- Obtaining and reviewing written policies, forms, and guidance issued by the WDB for each program component; and
- Discussion of identified issues requiring correction by the respective WDB.

CTDOL's WIOA Administration Unit continued to promote collaboration and communication within the workforce system through WDB and partner meetings on an as-needed basis, in person and through remote meetings.

## **WIOA Participant and Employer Survey Results**

During Program Year 2019, the Connecticut Department of Labor utilized SurveyMonkey to gather customer satisfaction information from participants. A total of 208 participants completed surveys. The majority of these respondents provided positive feedback to survey questions, with many specifically praising the professionalism, knowledge, and helpfulness of the American Job Centers' (AJC) staff. Many respondents reported praises for the individual staff they worked with, indicating that participants appreciate the individualized service they received. Some respondents indicated that they wished the process was faster and required less documentation.

The results of the participant\* surveys were as follows:

- 89% were very satisfied with the services provided by the American Job Centers
- 91% believed the services exceeded their expectations
- 90% believed the services provided were very close to the ideal set of services

Satisfaction surveys were also made available to employers\* during PY19, through a combination of sources. CTDOL's WIOA webpage hosts an employer survey powered by SurveyMonkey. In addition, Connecticut's virtual one-stop delivery system, CTHires, includes an option for employer feedback. Surveys were also available at job fairs. While the number of surveys submitted was low, overall employer responses were positive in regard to services provided and meeting their expectations.

## **Performance and Accountability**

The Connecticut Department of Labor's (CTDOL) Performance and Accountability Unit is primarily tasked with the collection, compilation, evaluation, reporting, and distribution of performance and demographic data for state-funded and federally-funded programs and services that are administered and delivered by CTDOL, in collaboration with its partners and subcontractors. The unit also provides technical support to those administering the various programs and services that include:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) - Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth
- Veterans
- Wagner-Peyser Act
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Jobs First Employment Services (JFES)
- Unemployment Insurance (UI)
- Foreign Labor Certification
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers
- Connecticut Individual Development Account Initiative

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\*Results are not intended to make any inferences beyond the survey's respondents.

To submit and generate required reports, the Performance and Accountability Unit utilizes the federal Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS). First, data extracts are generated for each report by Geographic Solutions, Inc., the developer of CTDOL's web-based case management system, then the extracts are provided to the Performance and Accountability Unit. Prior to report certification by CTDOL to USDOL, the unit collaborates with program administrators to ensure that program data is reviewed and accuracy is confirmed. For its performance data, Connecticut utilizes in-state wage information as well as data from the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) and Federal Employment Data Exchange System (FEDES).

As mandated by WIOA, CTDOL must collaborate with the Connecticut Department of Aging and Disability Services and the Connecticut State Department of Education for quarterly and annual reporting purposes. CTDOL previously established Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) for the exchange of data with these WIOA-required core partners and continues to share data as outlined in each respective memorandum. Each core partner transmits data to CTDOL via CTDOL's PilotFish, a server with a collection of software tools that allows for the secure connection, translation, and transformation of data between heterogeneous systems. The parties to the MOU share both participant data of those co-enrolled in the core programs of each entity as well as wage and employment data for all participants, not only those co-enrolled. A unique identification number is assigned, via CTDOL's MS SQL Server database, to represent each data entity (individual) instead of their Social Security Number. The unique identification number and co-enrollment and wage information are returned to the core partners for inclusion in each agency's respective federal report.

The Performance and Accountability Unit also synthesizes raw UI data and generates monthly reports so CTDOL's administration may determine whether claimants receive their benefits within federally-mandated timeframes; gathers and provides data critical to both negotiating the establishment of the state's WIOA performance goals with the Workforce Development Boards and helping to ensure Connecticut is meeting those goals; prepares CTDOL's section of the Governor's Budget Narrative; supports various programs with Data Element Validation tasks; and designs surveys and analyzes their results for numerous CTDOL units.

### **Continuing Workforce Activities**

#### **CTHires**

In addition to its numerous reporting responsibilities described in the summary above, the Performance and Accountability Unit also administers the Connecticut Department of Labor's web-based case management system, CTHires. The system offers an array of options, including a job skills assessment tool; a format to create and send résumés and cover letters to employers; a job bank; a list of training providers; a job search tracker; a virtual job recruiter/job candidate finder; labor market information; and system email for communications between jobseekers, employers, case managers, and training providers.

From July 2019 through June 2020, a total of 988 registrations from businesses were processed by CTHires staff. During this same period, employers posted 42,796 new Connecticut job orders and jobseekers placed 5,405 new résumés into the system. In addition, 114,673 job orders were indexed from corporate websites in PY19. CTHires also collects WIOA-required data for reporting on self-services and staff-assisted services for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs.



Since CTHires was launched in Program Year (PY) 2015, various components have been added to the system to integrate additional programs, such as Foreign Labor Certification in PY16 and JFES in PY17. In late PY19, the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program was added, which will provide for the electronic filing of WOTC applications by employers once conversion and testing work is completed. Implementation of WOTC within CTHires is expected to occur during the first half of PY20.

### **Rapid Response and National Dislocated Worker Grants**

The state Rapid Response (RR) Unit, in conjunction with local Workforce Development Boards and other One-Stop partners, is responsible under WIOA Title I (20 CFR, Part 682, Subpart C) for carrying out rapid response activities statewide. Headed by the Connecticut Department of Labor, the RR Unit reaches out to employers contemplating or experiencing layoffs and plant closings. Employers, affected workers, and their unions are provided information on layoff aversion, mass layoff/plant closing, unemployment insurance, WIOA, One-Stop employment services, and various labor laws. The RR Unit also makes referrals to, and coordinates services with, CTDOL units, other agencies, and programs for special intervention or supportive services applicable to dislocated workers and struggling businesses.

During the period of July 2019 to June 2020, the RR Unit made 404 initial outreach calls regarding potential layoffs and responded to 99 WARN notices affecting 9,342 workers. The RR staff made 56 employer and/or union visits and provided 105 presentations to 1,591 impacted workers, which included seven on-site job search and/or career planning workshops, two Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) information sessions, and 28 webinars for workers from companies that did not avail themselves of Rapid Response services prior to layoff.

Employment sites where face-to-face contact was not possible were provided packets of information, benefiting an additional 1,129 dislocated workers, including human resources managers and union representatives. An additional 2,706 webinar invitations were sent to workers who were part of large layoffs but whose employers declined on-site visits or had employees who work remotely.

As a means of layoff aversion, the RR Unit coordinated or assisted with two company-specific job fairs providing 450 jobseekers the opportunity to meet with potential hiring employers. RR staff also reached out to 32 employers participating in the Shared Work program to check their status and make appropriate referrals to Economic Development or other resources if the employers indicated they were continuing to struggle or have difficulty emerging from a downturn in business. RR Unit staff also played a significant role in providing information and fielding questions regarding Shared Work as well as assisting with the processing of roughly 1,100 Shared Work applications received by CTDOL since mid-March when the COVID-19 pandemic began to significantly impact businesses.

The RR Unit submitted 20 TAA petitions on behalf of workers whose jobs were believed to be affected by increased imports or a shift in production to a foreign country. Eight petitions, covering 323 workers, were certified TAA eligible. Four petitions were still pending investigation at the close of the program year, and one petition was withdrawn. Seven petitions resulted in negative determinations.

It should also be noted that between March 23, 2020 and June 30, 2020, RR Unit staff also responded to approximately 15,000 emails from employers, displaced workers, and union representatives who had a variety of questions and/or issues related to job losses due to COVID-19.

Capital Workforce Partners (CWP), which was awarded a Trade and Economic Transition National Dislocated Worker Grant by USDOL in PY18, continued to serve those eligible under the \$5.88 million grant during PY19. According to USDOL's TEGL 2-18, Trade and Economic Transition grants generally provide resources for the provision of employment and training assistance to workers affected by major economic dislocations. Under the grant, CWP provides up to \$9,000 per dislocated worker in scholarship funds and supportive services, for up to 500 dislocated workers in Connecticut, to attend community college and other training programs that lead to jobs in the manufacturing and healthcare sectors. The grant also provides up to \$20,000 in On-the-Job Training (OJT) incentives per new hire to area employers in the priority sectors of healthcare and manufacturing and, with USDOL's approval of CWP's plan to expand the program's scope, information technology, construction, and transportation/logistics employers also benefit from the OJT option. The program also offers a variety of other resources for participants, including career coaching, supportive services, career bootcamps, job placement assistance and recruitment events. The project has served more than 300 job seekers and, as of June 30, 2020, a total of 120 customers have enrolled in ITA training; 25 have been placed into OJT; and a total of 138 have obtained employment. The grant period is from October 2018 to September 2020.

During PY19, USDOL awarded a Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grant for up to \$4,757,845.00 to CTDOL, with an initial distribution of \$1,585,948.00, for the provision of comprehensive workforce services to assist Connecticut residents impacted by the opioid crisis. The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) administers the "Recovery Works" program and, in coordination with the state's five Workforce Development Boards, provides both statewide and local initiatives aimed at providing training, career services and support, employer outreach, and temporary disaster-relief employment for selected participants (dislocated workers). The grant funding supports two statewide initiatives and five regional programs. A Workforce Opioid Advisory Board was created to oversee the following statewide initiatives:

- Hiring and placing qualified individuals as Peer Recovery Navigators in each AJC; and
- Development of the Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW) initiative. RFWs support communities by recognizing that recovery is a strength and, through implementation of a Recovery Friendly Toolkit, RFWs commit to hiring and retaining those in recovery and also encourage a healthy, safe environment where the employer, employees, and communities collaborate to create positive change and eliminate barriers for those impacted by addiction.

The Connecticut Department of Labor Commissioner serves in a coordinative role. During PY19, thirty-five individuals were served.

## **Outreach Efforts by the Office of Research**

During PY19, the Connecticut Department of Labor's Office of Research staff engaged in numerous outreach activities on behalf of the agency, providing labor market information of interest to: jobseekers; workforce development professionals who provide job search and employment assistance; and education, government, and business leaders. The Office of Research also provided data and information to the Governor's Workforce Council and participated in the Council's Data and Performance Committee.

Presentations were made around the state at community and professional events, as well as for:

- Jobseeker groups;
- Business groups working to create jobs in Connecticut;
- Educational institutions helping their students with career planning; and
- Workforce development organizations working with a variety of constituencies.

Once COVID-19 concerns resulted in the cessation of in-person events, outreach moved to an online format, including presentations to trade associations and urban librarians.

The Office of Research continued to provide technical assistance to the Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) for Help Wanted OnLine (HWOL) through an account Research administers. All WDBs have access to the jobs posting data which is gathered from jobs posted each month from thousands of Internet job boards, corporate boards, and smaller job sites. During PY19, CTDOL and WDB staff participated in training provided by HWOL.

In addition, the Office of Research also:

- Participated in the STEM Career Showcase events at the Connecticut Science Center to provide information regarding STEM careers to children, their families, and teachers;
- Met with two of the five WDBs to discuss Research's data products and ways Research could assist the WDBs in serving mutual customers (the three other WDBs met with Research in the previous program year); and
- Provided ongoing support to both the state's education community and economic development efforts. This included meeting regularly with economists and officials from other state agencies about the use of labor market data to support the state's policy decision-making.

## **Employment and Training**

### **Wagner-Peyser**

CTDOL receives federal funding under the Wagner-Peyser Act to provide universal access to an array of labor exchange services offered at American Job Center (AJC) locations throughout Connecticut. These services include assistance with career choices and job search, referrals to jobs, placement assistance for jobseekers, reemployment services to claimants receiving

unemployment insurance, and employer recruitment services to businesses with job openings. Additional resources that are available at the AJCs include computers with Internet connection, copiers, fax machines; and résumé writing, interviewing, and career exploration workshops. During PY19, a total of 28,292 Wagner-Peyser program participants received services (staff-assisted or self-service) at AJC offices, with 85,174 staff-assisted services provided statewide. In addition, 2,721 individuals received résumé preparation assistance at CTDOL-sponsored events and job centers.

### Reemployment Services for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claimants

During periods of unemployment, the agency provides a variety of federally-funded reemployment services to residents. CTDOL meets the reemployment needs of many UI claimants through the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA) program, which serves claimants who are either profiled as most likely to exhaust benefits or receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemembers (UCX). The goal of this program is to provide UI claimants early access to services that will help get them back into the workforce faster. The UI RESEA program also serves as a prevention/detection program regarding improper UI payments. In PY19, CTDOL completed 5,401 Initial RESEA appointments. For this same time period, 5,140 claimants participated in a required reemployment activity.

On March 13, 2020, the RESEA program was suspended temporarily due to the immediate concern over COVID-19 and the risk to customers and staff. The AJCs were closed to the public and technology was not in place to provide virtual services. In addition, ES/RESEA staff were reassigned to UI Benefits to tackle the tremendous workload and unprecedented volume of claims that resulted from the implementation of four new federal UI programs (PUA, FPUC, PEUC and EB). It is anticipated that CTDOL will resume the RESEA program in late summer 2020, with a new virtual service delivery model.

### Business Services

Business Services helps Connecticut's employers to hire, train and retain workers by analyzing the needs of businesses and customizing solutions. In PY19, Business Services staff assisted employers with more than 556 employer recruitments attended by approximately 5,166 jobseekers.

In addition, the Middlesex County Career Fair was held in Cromwell on October 23, 2019. The fair, sponsored by CTDOL, the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce, and Workforce Alliance, drew 38 company recruiters and 350 jobseekers.

### **Serving Our Veterans**

Connecticut's veterans receive reemployment services from trained staff at AJCs throughout the state. Among the staff are representatives funded by the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program which offers specialized services to veterans. Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists provide intensive services and facilitate job placements to meet the employment needs of certain veterans and eligible spouses; those who have significant barriers to employment or other characteristics specified by the Secretary of Labor qualify for referral to

a DVOP and may receive a jointly-developed employment plan and individualized career services that are administered through case management. Local Veterans' Employment Representatives conduct outreach to area employers to assist veterans in gaining employment; they also facilitate the employment, training, and placement services for all veterans in the AJCs.

During PY19, DVOP staff provided employment and training services to 755 JVSG participants, approximately 61 percent of the 1,231 eligible veterans served under Wagner-Peyser. Included in these counts are veterans filing for unemployment compensation who were connected to reemployment services through UI RESEA, as well as those who may have been simultaneously served by other workforce programs in the AJC. Community engagement during the program year by JVSG staff included the September 2019 Stand Down at the State Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill, an annual event for veterans who are homeless, chronically unemployed, or have difficulty adjusting in society. In partnership with the Department of Defense and the Connecticut Military Department, JVSG staff also assisted military troops and their families, including returning troops from the Connecticut National Guard and U.S. Armed Service Reserves, by participating in one Yellow Ribbon event and six Soldier Readiness Program briefings. Until suspended due to COVID-19, outreach efforts on college campuses and at the facilities of service providers and other veterans' organizations helped to further connect veterans with the AJCs and JVSG services.

CTDOL continued to work toward ending veteran homelessness through its Homeless Veterans Employment Program (HVEP), which operates under a state grant. During the program year, CTDOL's HVEP team met with 28 homeless veterans, or those at risk of becoming homeless, to provide job search assistance, referral information, and other supportive services. Specifically, 21 of these individuals received direct services from HVEP staff, such as résumé preparation assistance, job search assistance and career guidance; five were referred to housing services; one was referred to medical services; six were referred to other supportive services; and eight were referred to employment and training services at the AJCs. As a result of COVID-19, HVEP staff discontinued community outreach; by late March, CTDOL reassigned HVEP staff to assist with UI functions and the program suspended operations. Homeless veterans remain eligible to receive services from the DVOPs, however, as well as from other providers that include grantees of the U.S. Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Supportive Services for Veteran Families.

### **Jobs First Employment Services Integration in the American Job Centers**

In partnership with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the five Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), CTDOL administers the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program which provides a host of employment-related services to recipients of Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), Connecticut's federally-funded cash assistance program for low-income families under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The WDBs operate as intermediaries that subcontract with other organizations to provide direct services to JFES participants in American Job Centers (AJCs) around the state. In PY19, the WDBs coordinated an array of seamless case management and employment services for 5,369 TFA recipients enrolled in the JFES program.

In PY19, CTDOL's JFES Unit further developed two programs that had been launched as pilots in PY18:

- The JFES Unit continued to support the partnership between CTDOL, DSS, Workforce Alliance (the South Central WDB), and Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS), a refugee resettlement agency. This collaboration better connected refugees in the New Haven region with JFES services by co-locating a JFES case manager at IRIS.
- Two additional WDBs, Southwest and South Central, offered UBER or LYFT ridesharing options to JFES participants with significant transportation barriers. The Northwest and Eastern WDBs, which were the two areas piloted in PY18, continued to provide this assistance in PY19.

On March 14, 2020, Governor Lamont issued a COVID-19 Executive Order that included the temporarily waiving of all in-person TFA interview requirements. Since TFA could be granted without mandated participation in employment services, JFES was temporarily suspended at the AJCs, although JFES participants could volunteer to participate virtually in the program. Moving towards providing virtual services initiated some program adjustments including:

- Holding all meetings/communication by email, phone, and/or video conferencing;
- Assisting participants with online career guidance and resume creation efforts; and
- Helping participants identify local resources to assist families that may be in crisis due to COVID-19.

While JFES staff were providing virtual services, they also participated in additional telework assignments that included monitoring and updating the CTHires case management system and participating in extensive professional development opportunities and online training programs coordinated by CTDOL or WDBs. Over 70 JFES staff received virtual training on topics such as:

- Virtual Case Management with a Holistic Approach
- Trauma Informed Care
- Case Notes Management
- Certified Employment Interview Professional (CEIP) home-study certification process
- Metrix online learning training programs

### **Job Corps**

Through Job Corps, youth have the opportunity to receive educational and career technical training, thereby gaining the skills needed to become employable, independent citizens. This federally-funded program, administered by the USDOL Employment and Training Administration, offers residential and non-residential placements for youth ages 16-24 (no upper age or income limits for those with disabilities) as well as intensive, wraparound service such as career and mental health counseling, driver education, social skills training, and many other services that lend to participants' achievements. Job Corps' success in Connecticut is largely



due to the collaborative efforts of CTDOL, the Workforce Development Boards, state and local agencies and organizations, and Job Corps' program operators.

During PY19, a variety of trades were offered at two Connecticut Job Corps locations. New Haven Job Corps Center offered Culinary Arts, Certified Nursing Assistant, Building Construction Technology, Plumbing, and Carpentry. Trades available at the Hartford Job Corps Center included Business Technology/Insurance & Financial Services, Manufacturing Technology, and Health Occupations (Certified Nursing Assistant and Clinical Medical Assistant). Students who qualified for the Advanced Career Training program were eligible to continue their education at local colleges and universities or transfer to a Job Corps Center offering advanced training in the field of their choice.



*In welcoming Groundhog Job Shadow Day participants to CTDOL, Commissioner Kurt Westby encouraged job exploration.*

A seventeen-year tradition between CTDOL and the state's two Job Corps Centers continued in 2020 when students from both the Hartford and New Haven locations attended "Groundhog Job Shadow Day" on February 4 in Wethersfield. CTDOL Commissioner Kurt Westby greeted the participating young adults and encouraged them to explore agency departments and opportunities related to their field of study and take the time to ask questions. Following the group presentation, the participants partnered with CTDOL employees from the following units to job shadow for the day: Trade Adjustment Assistance Unit, WIOA Unit, Communications, Office of

Research, Division of Wage and Workplace Standards, and Facilities. The Connecticut Labor Department Federal Credit Union also volunteered to provide an on-the-job experience; three students from the Financial Services trade were welcomed there by a Credit Union staff member who had graduated from Job Corps.

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Connecticut changed the way services were delivered by many entities, including Job Corps. Enrolled students participated through distance learning beginning in April 2020 and campus tours were offered via virtual orientations. New student enrollment is expected to resume in the fall of 2020.

### **Serving Individuals with Disabilities**

The Connecticut Department of Labor, the Departments of Social Services (DSS) and Aging and Disability Services, and other state agencies and community-based organizations offer assistance and guidance on opportunities and options for individuals with disabilities. One particular role that remains a focus for CTDOL in this regard is the agency's membership on the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. In support of the Committee's mission of addressing the workforce development needs of individuals with disabilities, CTDOL provides links to disability resources for employers and jobseekers at [www.ctdol.state.ct.us/gendocs/pwd.htm](http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/gendocs/pwd.htm), a web page developed collaboratively by CTDOL and the Governor's Committee. Information on assistive technology, tax credits, workplace accommodations, and disability employment initiatives is offered via the web page.

In February, a seminar was held for employers to share information and resources to help businesses strengthen their Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) programs and mitigate compliance risk. The “Americans with Disabilities Act - What Every Employer Needs to Know” business breakfast offered an interactive workshop with engaging topics for the 38 attendees of the event. The workshop included exercises in encouraging disability disclosure; mapping the accommodations journey; learning how to create a welcoming and engaging workplace culture; developing corporate communications that address various disabilities; and promoting empathy in employee interactions.

In addition, CTDOL serves as a member of the following:

- **Parents with Cognitive Limitations Workgroup** – This workgroup, with members from various public and private agencies from around the state, is led by the Department of Children and Families and provides training to professionals to better equip them in assisting parents with cognitive limitations to access and navigate the vast offering of services available to them.
- **Disability Focus Group** – The members of this group, including the Department of Aging and Disability Services, the Department of Developmental Services, State Department of Education, CTDOL, Capitol Region Education Council, and Adult Education providers, plan the Annual Conference on Serving Adults with Disabilities.
- **Connecticut Tech Act Project Advisory Council** – This group, whose members include representatives of agencies interested in advancing the use of assistive technology (AT), individuals with disabilities who use AT, and family members or guardians of those individuals, provides input and perspectives regarding the Tech Act Project and the statewide, comprehensive activities implemented through it. Funded by a federal grant and overseen by the Department of Aging and Disability Services, the Tech Act Project has made significant strides in familiarizing employer and individuals with AT options.

In October 2016, Connecticut was among six states to receive a federal grant under Round VII of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). Awarded to the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, this three-year, \$2.5 million youth-focused project, which concluded on April 1, 2020, involved the Northwest, Southwest, South Central, and Eastern workforce development regions. This project sought to increase the participation of youth with disabilities ages 14-24 in the public workforce system’s career pathways programs; offer the opportunity to attain industry-recognized credentials; and provide paid internships and experiential learning opportunities. As of April 1, 2020, 276 youth with disabilities entered training in career pathway programs, 250 received industry-recognized credentials, and 1,172 were placed in paid internship or work experiences.

## **Workforce Development Boards**

(Summary information has been provided by Connecticut's Workforce Development Boards.)

### **Northwest (Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board)**

#### **Northwest Construction Careers Initiative**

During PY19, outreach and recruitment of residents in the NRWIB area continued for the Northwest Construction Careers Initiative (NCCI). Under the Initiative, local trade unions work in partnership with private sector companies to encourage careers through apprenticeship in a variety of construction trades. Over 125 participants were served; throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, although the NRWIB's office was closed to the public, virtual services and other technology made it possible to continue the provision of NCCI services.

The NRWIB also developed a reentry program that offers a two-week workshop to prepare participants with job-ready skills or the opportunity for more training. Work continues with local trade unions for placement in a variety of construction areas.

There has also been a major focus in participating with Building Pathways, a program designed as an introduction to various trades. NRWIB stayed connected with the Waterbury Building Trades Council representatives by participating in the Joint Apprenticeship Training Directors Committee of Connecticut (JATDCC). On the non-union side of the training, the board built a relationship with the Construction Education Center in Plainville. The Center's apprenticeship trainings are included on the WIOA Eligible Training Provider List via CTHires at CTDOL's website. NRWIB also administers the Good Jobs Ordinance, the local hiring ordinance issued by the City of Waterbury that requires contractors working on Waterbury projects with a value of \$500,000 or greater to hire qualified Waterbury residents. Contractors are required to hire 30% residents and 10% minority. The board continued to offer OSHA 10 classes multiple times a year, since this certification is mandatory for those who want to work in the construction field.

#### **WIOA Demonstration Grant - Rise Up Retail Training**

Rise Up Retail Training, a groundbreaking training program designed by the National Retail Merchant Association, provides adult education students an opportunity to acquire the skills and industry credential needed to secure employment in the retail sector. The program's curriculum, developed by the National Retail Federation (NRF), is designed to help participants acquire a certificate in Customer Service and Sales regardless of their education, means, or age. Upon completion of training in Customer Service and Sales, students take the NRF's online exam. Successful completers achieve nationally-recognized certification in Customer Service and Sales. Credentialed students then move on to an 80-hour, paid internship opportunity, earning the prevailing minimum wage. From that point, they are well-prepared to enter employment in retail and, with it, find the potential for career advancement.

#### **Ticket to Work**

Ticket to Work is a voluntary Social Security program that assists recipients of SSI or SSDI benefits, age 18 through 65, to obtain vocational counseling, training, job readiness, job referrals and other employment support services, free of charge. Authorized by the Social Security Administration as an "Employment Network," the NRWIB offered these services to 47 participants during PY19. In February 2019, the board also hired a Ticket to Work coordinator

and began conducting a vigorous recruitment campaign in March. As a result of these efforts, 235 prospective participants were identified as of May 2020. To participate, individuals must be currently receiving SSI or SSDI, meet the age criteria, and be willing to work full time. While participating, disability medical reviews are deferred, Medicare/Medicaid benefits continue, and the individual will receive expedited reinstatement of benefits if needed.

### TechHire

NRWIB's TechHire ITXpress program, funded by a grant from USDOL, trains unemployed and out-of-school young adults (ages 17-29) and upgrades the skills of current workers for jobs in the information technology (IT) industry including computer user support, software development, information system management, and computer programming. In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, NRWIB and its grant partner, the South Central board, continued to provide TechHire services although training was offered remotely. Supportive services, which often make the difference in being able to remain and participate in training, were provided on the basis of need, participant commitment, and other relevant criteria. These supports, in conjunction with the program's human-centered approach of career navigation, have contributed to participants' ability to fully participate in grant-funded activities. During the grant period (up to June 30, 2020):

- 448 participants have been enrolled;
- 265 completed training;
- 235 obtained credentials; and
- 161 obtained employment.

The program ends in December 2020.

### Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative

NRWIB's Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative program addresses the shortage of skilled workers in the manufacturing sector. Established as a regional partnership, the Initiative is comprised of:

- Manufacturing Alliance Service Corporation
- Northwestern Connecticut Community College
- Naugatuck Valley Community College
- High Schools: Torrington, Danbury, New Milford, Waterbury, and state technical high schools
- Sixteen employers from the Northwest workforce development region (which includes Waterbury, Torrington and Danbury)
- Business associations
- Chambers of commerce

In total, twelve 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in manufacturing training in an after-school format during the 2019-2020 school year. Twenty-four adults (age 18 and over and not in high school) participated in Northwestern Connecticut Community College's Manufacturing Certificate training and CNC Machine Operator training. Another 27 adults participated in

manufacturing training at the Manufacturing Alliance Service Corporation in Waterbury. Graduates benefit from the incentives available to employers that promote job placement, such as funding for On-the-Job training.

### Youth

The NRWIB strives to deliver a comprehensive array of youth services that focus on assisting out-of-school youth who have one or more barriers to employment to prepare for post-secondary education and employment opportunities. The goal is to attain educational and/or skills training credentials, and secure employment with career/promotional opportunities. During PY19, thirty-three youth attained either a recognized certificate, diploma, and/or degree, and eight received post-secondary education. In total, sixty-seven youth participants were served during the program year.

## **Southwest (The WorkPlace)**

### AJC Website

In June 2020, the new American Job Center Network – Southwest Connecticut (<https://ajcswct.com/>) was launched by The WorkPlace for the Southwest American Job Center (SW AJC) with an improved design, functionality, and hosting platform. The site includes a more user-friendly content management system that allows staff to publish articles, post videos and audio, customize web pages, change images, and edit, add and delete displayed content. The site is mobile friendly and compatible with popular browsers. Overall, the new website is positioned to help jobseekers, employers, and other customers learn about services provided by SW AJC.

### AJC Employer Video Series

To increase the dissemination of workforce information to the business community, it has become imperative to deliver services in a new, on-demand format. In light of this, The WorkPlace created a nine-part video series, targeted to employers throughout Connecticut, to showcase the services provided by the American Job Centers (AJC) and highlight how the AJC can save them time and money. Each 3-5 minute video introduces a different component of the services available through the AJC network, with topics that include how to recruit from the AJC, skill upgrades for staff, wage and workplace standards, and workforce diversification. Information is included on how businesses may receive a range of services, including access to a quality trained workforce, training resources and labor market data.

The videos can be found on <https://ajcswct.com/> and are available to appear on the websites of Connecticut's Workforce Development Boards and AJCs, the Connecticut Department of Labor, and other partner agencies.

## ESL Provided Through the Job Centers

The demographics in the Southwest American Job Centers consistently change. Upon recently identifying an increasing number of non-English speakers seeking services, a dedicated English as a Second Language (ESL) program was created in the Bridgeport office. The program is an open-entry model that assists customers with the quick acquisition of English language skills. Offered daily and serving approximately 16 customers a month, the program also coordinates appropriate AJC services such as workshops, supportive services, and referrals to partners. The addition of the ESL program has enabled the AJC to be responsive to the communities' needs while ensuring a qualified, skilled workforce for employers.

## Response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted the service delivery and design of Southwest's American Job Centers (AJCs). The speed of the pandemic's arrival necessitated that Southwest AJCs quickly adjust operations away from the traditional service delivery model that required most, if not all, activities to be delivered face-to-face in an office setting. During March and April, the first months of the pandemic in Connecticut, the AJC prioritized with three core pillars:

- Stabilizing staff to work remotely;
- Connecting with all customers via telephone or video platforms; and
- Developing staff skills and abilities.

By adding virtual services and focusing on these core pillars, the SW AJCs were able to continue to provide quality workforce development services. To highlight hiring employers and connect customers, virtually, to open positions, plans were developed for an "employer corner" to be added to the AJC website. To be proactive while the "employer corner" effort progressed, the board recorded video messages from hiring employers and sent them to job seekers via email. In addition, all informational and orientation workshops were moved online, an online virtual scheduler was added to quickly connect job seekers and employers to appropriate services, and The WorkPlace collaborated with system partners to ensure referrals were coordinated seamlessly.

The WorkPlace also invested in its own workforce by delivering more than 75 workforce training sessions on topics such as Labor Market Information, WIOA Career Pathways, and performance. More than 50 self-help trainings on topics covering health, wellness, and exercise were also provided.

## Youth

### Summer Earn and Learn Youth Program

The 2019 Summer Youth Earn and Learn Employment Program (SYELEP) provided a variety of opportunities for youth from across Connecticut's Southwestern board area to gain practical experience and develop valuable life and work skills. SYELEP, which serves youth ages 14 to 21, is designed to provide valuable work experience and help youth develop positive work habits and connect academic relevance with career choices. Just over 1,300 youth applied and, via a lottery process, a total of 400 participants were selected for the program.



Participants spent the first week of the 7-week program in intensive work readiness training designed to prepare them to meet employer expectations. Youth then worked an average of 20 hours per week. Whether in a law office, hospital, manufacturing plant, small business, government agency, or non-profit, the work performed often helped employers tackle projects that would have otherwise not been completed. A number of the older youth received job offers for full-time, year-round employment---a key indicator that their employers were pleased with the experience. Much of the program's success is due to employers who provide structured learning opportunities for youth, as well as funding from the Connecticut Department of Labor, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families, and the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration.

### **Eastern (Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board - EWIB)**

#### Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative

The Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI), an award-winning workforce program managed by the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) and other partners, continues to flourish in the Eastern region. Since its inception in 2016, the MPI has placed over 1,600 individuals in jobs by raising the baseline of competencies in the jobseeker and aligning those skills with jobs in demand by manufacturers. With a solid foundation of curriculum designed by manufacturers and academia, the MPI's success is also attributable to its strong partnership of 30 stakeholders, including the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance which designed and implemented the program. In March 2020, the MPI was recognized with an award for "Outstanding Achievement in Partnership" by the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), an association of 550 workforce boards across the country. The award recognized the community impact of the MPI.

#### Health Profession Opportunity Grant

The five-year, \$7.5M Health & Human Service (HHS) Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG), awarded in partnership to EWIB and the Northwest and South Central Workforce Development Boards in September 2015, was extended by HHS for a sixth year. HPOG targets individuals receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and low-income adults. The program offers a "boot camp" to build foundational skills as well as entry-level vocational trainings in healthcare. In the Eastern region, through June 2020, 137 participants have been enrolled, 102 completed healthcare training, and 90 secured employment in healthcare or other sectors.

#### Youth

#### Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative

The Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI) is an extension of the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) described above. The YMPI offers the potential for a career pathway for high school graduates who have chosen to enter the job market instead of college. EWIB has partnered with 15 regional high schools, that have begun to embed the YMPI curriculum into their schools. In its first two years of existence, the YMPI has placed 81 graduates into

jobs. The program has received strong support from the participating schools' administrators and youth participants.

### Summer Youth Employment Program

EWIB's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) is delivered by EASTCONN, in partnership with New London Youth Affairs and Norwich Human Services, across the 41 towns in the region. The program provides valuable job experience and skills to youth while paying their wages. In PY19, the SYEP served 447 income-eligible youth at 230 different job sites throughout eastern Connecticut. Program participants gained employability skills through job duties in office assistance, engineering support, recreation, teaching assistance, and other areas. The program was financially supported by the Connecticut Department of Labor and received philanthropic donations from local foundations.

### **North Central (Capital Workforce Partners)**

#### Capital Area Pipeline Partnership

During PY19, Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) continued its unique, regional, employer-led "partnership of partnerships" through the Capital Area Pipeline Partnership (CAPP). With its associated strategic partners and leaders of sector-specific partnerships, CAPP has been successful in its objective to drive strategy and action in developing a regional pipeline of job-ready talent to meet employers' demand for skilled workers in the North Central area, support business growth, and promote workers' financial security. CAPP partners include: Advanced Manufacturing Employer Partnership (AMEP); Metro Hartford Alliance for Careers in Health (MACH); Jobs Funnel Construction and Transportation Partnership (Jobs Funnel); Capitol Region Council of Governments; Connecticut Business and Industry Association; Hartford Foundation for Public Giving; MetroHartford Alliance; United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut; Workforce Solutions Collaborative of Metro Hartford; Connecticut General Assembly Leadership; and Municipal Economic Development Officials.

In addition to meeting employers' current needs for skilled workers, CAPP also endeavors to develop a sustainable pipeline of skilled, entry-level workers to meet anticipated future workforce needs. Career advancement is another central focus of CAPP. Filling high-value, in-demand, well-paying, middle-skill jobs that offer practical opportunities for career growth remains an ongoing objective of the Capital Area Pipeline Partnership.

#### Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Second Chance Pilot/BEST Chance

In 2016, the State of Connecticut chose Capital Workforce Partners as the lead organization to implement the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) Second Chance Pilot as a contextualized learning pilot program in Hartford County to reduce unemployment and recidivism rates among soon-to-be-released offenders and ex-offenders in Connecticut. This year, a total of 147 program participants were served. Eighty-eight participants earned at least one industry-recognized credential, while a total of 188 credentials were issued.

### Call Center

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, CWP established a call center to assist job seekers and employers. The call center also assists CTDOL with providing general unemployment information to the public as well as providing job seekers with information about services offered through the American Job Center. In addition, employers were assisted in looking to fill essential positions. As of June 30, 2020, the call center assisted over 5,000 callers.

### Jobs Funnel - CT Women Can Weld Program

The North Central Region Jobs Funnel Program, under the administration of Capital Workforce Partners, partnered with the Ironworkers Local 15 Apprenticeship Training Program for the delivery of the “CT Women Can Weld Program.” This 10-week program, offered to female residents of Connecticut, is designed to introduce participants to welding. Of the twenty PY19 graduates, seventeen secured full-time employment in training-related occupations as welders, forklift operators, traffic flaggers, ironworkers and glaziers. Participant Lisa Hall was accepted into the glazier apprenticeship and referred to a Hartford construction project in June 2020. She worked under the supervision of journeyman ironworker Dana Middleton, Sr., a past graduate of the Jobs Funnel Program.



*Lisa Hall, welding apprentice, with supervisor Dana Middleton, Sr.*

### Youth

#### Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program (SYELP)

CWP had a successful 2019 summer youth program, with 1,461 youth employed across the region and a total of 164,946 hours worked. In addition, CWP partnered with Hartford Public Schools and the City of Hartford to provide a summer learning opportunity for 242 rising ninth grade Hartford students. The purpose was to prevent “summer slide” and reduce chronic absenteeism, which tends to affect ninth graders at a higher level.

### Youth Symposium

On November 22, 2019, hundreds of youth, service providers and community members from Hartford, Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Portland, Maine turned out for the CWP-organized Northeast Opportunity Youth Conference at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford to share inspiration, resources, stories, and best practices to address the needs of opportunity youth (at-risk 18 to 24 year old youths not actively engaged in school or the workforce). The event, led by the Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative, was sponsored by State Representative Toni Walker and co-sponsored by Senator Douglas McCrory and Representative Brandon McGee.

## South Central (Workforce Alliance)

### Adapting to the New Normal with Online Services

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the lives of individuals and impacted communities and businesses across the entire state. There was no exception to this for the South Central Workforce Development Board area, including Workforce Alliance and the region's American Job Centers (AJC). With significant challenges affecting the region and many needs to address, services to customers and employers could not and did not stop due to the pandemic. Rather, necessary adaptations to services were made as health guidelines and restrictions became the norm.

One key change was the creation of a new four-step process to begin WIOA services that includes watching the South Central Connecticut American Job Center's new "Job Seeker Orientation" video at <https://www.workforcealliance.biz/job-opportunities/>. By the end of the program year on June 30, the orientation video had more than 300 views. In contrast, just under 40 individuals a month, on average, attended in-person orientations from July 2019 to February 2020, before the mandated shutdown.



*Helen Sneed of the South Central Connecticut American Job Center hosts the new orientation video for jobseekers.*

After watching the seven-minute orientation video and a brief introductory video about the AJCs, interested job seekers are encouraged to complete a short, online form, then check their email for next steps from an AJC Ambassador. The Ambassador walks individuals through the CTHires registration and required documents. Individuals have the option to upload documents directly to CTHires or utilize a secure document drop-off area created in both the New Haven and Meriden AJCs. Upon completing the necessary steps, participants are connected to a Job Seeker Consultant and begin developing an individual employment plan. Despite the suspension of in-person services from March to June 2020, 85 new enrollments into WIOA were successfully completed, which helped to bring South Central's PY19 total to 519 new WIOA enrollees (Youth, DW, and Adult). In addition to the WIOA job seeker orientation, South Central created and posted ten videos of the most popular South Central workshops in April 2020 at <https://www.workforcealliance.biz/american-job-centers/>. Collectively, these were viewed approximately 650 times by the June 30, 2020 close of PY19.

### Youth

#### Project CEO Wraps Up Its First Full Year with 101 Placements

In Program Year 2019, the South Central Workforce Development Board fully implemented Project CEO, an opportunity for out-of-school, young job seekers (ages 16-24) to pursue the training, education, and skills in leadership and job readiness needed for their desired career pathways. Services included, but were not limited to, leadership development workshops, occupational skills training, paid work experience, job search assistance, and support services

through the American Job Centers. During PY19, even with the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns and related challenges, Project CEO served 190 participants and, as of June 2020, had placed 101 participants into employment or post-secondary education. Additional details are available at [www.workforcealliance.biz/project-ceo](http://www.workforcealliance.biz/project-ceo).

### Summer and Year-Round Youth Opportunities

Through its 30 municipalities and various participating community-based organizations in the South Central area, Workforce Alliance provided valuable work experience opportunities to local youth and young adults, ages 14-21. In PY19, WIOA funding made it possible for 750 participants to be employed at 236 works sites across the region. Program participants were employed in jobs within the manufacturing, health care, retail, and social services sectors, and gained skills through job duties in administrative/clerical work, maintenance, customer service, counseling and childcare.

### **Cost of Workforce Development Activities**

During Program Year 2019, a total of \$26,253,534 was allocated to the Workforce Development Boards for WIOA services, an increase from the PY18 WIOA allocation of \$25,447,272. Funds were distributed as follows:

#### Program Year 2019 Fund Allocation

Adult - \$8,301,739  
Dislocated Worker - \$8,821,606  
Youth - \$9,130,189

As reported to USDOL by CTDOL via form ETA 9169 for the reporting period covering July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, a total of 5,376 participants were served during PY19. Of those served, the Adult program assisted the largest number of participants, with 2,337 participants served, which is 43 percent of the total WIOA individuals served. Also in PY19, a total of 1,814 Dislocated Workers and 1,225 Youth were served, comprising 34 percent and 23 percent of the total number of WIOA participants served respectively.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Connecticut experienced a drop in numbers served. The decline began in March, with the arrival of the pandemic in the state, and continued through the remainder of PY19. During this period, which included months of office shutdowns and necessitated a shift to remote services, the WDBs pursued new technology options and other enhancements for virtual service delivery. For the last quarter of PY19, participation in Connecticut's workforce development activities was down 75% compared to the same time period in PY18. The action undertaken by the WDBs to quickly offer a "new normal" method of service delivery during the pandemic very likely prevented a more significant decline in the number of participants served.

### **Discussion of Activities Funded By WIOA 15% Statewide Funds**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the Governor to allocate the majority of WIOA funds, via formula, to the local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) which are responsible for setting local policy and directing the use of these formula-allocated funds in their regions. Under the Act, the Governor also may reserve a percentage of the state's WIOA funds for use in the administration and provision of statewide employment and training activities.

Statewide activities, delivered in Connecticut with 15% reserve funds during PY19, included:

- Maintaining the state list of eligible training providers;
- State administration of the adult, dislocated worker and youth workforce development activities, by conducting performance evaluations, including programmatic monitoring and customer satisfaction surveys;
- Assisting in the operations of the American Job Centers;
- Operating fiscal management and performance accountability system activities; and
- Supporting CTHires, the state's WIOA case management information system.

Activities related to monitoring, evaluation, and accountability provide essential information and guidance for the state and its workforce development partners in regard to continuous improvement and program efficiencies. Also, of particular value to the Workforce Development Boards in achieving programmatic goals is performance data that is made available through CTHires. By having timely access to this data, WDBs can analyze performance, determine areas in need of attention, and focus on solutions. In addition, the 15% Statewide Funds supported some new efforts, in the form of demonstration projects administered through the WDBs.